



Lowell Public Schools

COVID-19 UPDATES

August 25, 2021



SY 2021-2022 COVID-19 UPDATES

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Thank you for submitting the Authorized School Application and accompanying documents for participation in the SY22 COVID-19 Testing Program. I am writing to let you know that we have accepted Lowell_01600000 into the program, and you may begin working with CIC Health (cic-health.com/schools) immediately. The CIC team (listed below) will reach out to you within 48 hours to begin testing program setup, administer training, and answer any questions you may have.

CIC Health Team:

Alexis Orellana: orellana@cic.com David Berlin: david.berlin@cic.com Tim Rowe: rowe@cic.com
Shahid Azim: shahid.azim@cic.com Zack Ahrens: zack.ahrens@cic.com Bridget Stewart: bridget.stewart@cic.com
Vanessa Beck: beck@cic.com

Please note, Lowell_01600000 has also completed and is now approved to order BinaxNOW tests from DPH. CIC will manage the ordering process throughout the year, and they will get this underway during the onboarding process.

We also encourage you to use the School COVID-19 Testing Toolkit (www.CovidEdTesting.com) developed by the Shah Family Foundation, which includes great resources, templates, and examples to help your district get started with testing. The Shah Foundation is also available to support your team with 1:1 implementation support. You can email them at CovidEdTesting@shahfoundation.org.

Throughout this process, if you have general questions, please reach out to k12COVID19testing@mass.gov.

Sincerely,

Lauren Woo

Lauren Woo, M.Ed
Director, Office of Strategic Transformation
W 781-338-3563 | **C** 781-870-0096
Lauren.Woo@mass.gov
Pronouns: she, her, hers

[Center for District Support](#)
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148
[Web](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Newsletters](#)

SY 2021–2022 EXPECTATIONS/UNDERSTANDINGS

- ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN SCHOOL FULL-TIME, FIVE DAYS PER WEEK.
- ALL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS PREVIOUSLY ISSUED BY DESE HAVE BEEN LIFTED INCLUDING NO REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING.
- PER CITY OF LOWELL AND LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE, MASKS ARE REQUIRED INDOORS AT ALL TIMES EXCEPT DURING BREAKS AND WHEN EATING/DRINKING (or by medical exemption).
- UPDATED PHRASE – **ROUTINE COVID SAFETY CHECKS** (INSTEAD OF POOLED TESTING).
- CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN VENTILATION UPGRADES, CONTINUE HAND HYGIENE PRACTICES, AND STUDENTS AND STAFF SHOULD STAY HOME WHEN SICK.

TESTING SERVICES INCLUDED IN COVID-19 TESTING PROGRAM

Symptomatic Testing

- **For when individuals present symptoms while at school;** individuals should not go to school if experiencing symptoms while at home.
- Samples are collected at school using **the BinaxNOW rapid antigen test.**
- Those testing **negative with isolated/mild symptoms can stay** in school.

“Test and Stay”

Close contact testing

- For when individuals are in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual while at school.
- Samples are collected at school **using the BinaxNOW rapid antigen test.**
- Tests are **administered daily for at least five days** from the date of exposure.

Routine COVID Pooled Testing

- **Routine Pooled Testing and School-Based Follow-Up Testing:** samples are collected at school; if a pool is positive, follow-up testing at school with **either BinaxNOW and/or individual PCR testing as necessary.**
- **Routine Pooled Testing and Lab-Based Follow-Up Testing:** samples are collected; if a pool is positive, **individual follow-up testing occurs at the lab**, without a second sample collection.

TWO TESTING MODELS

- **DIAGNOSTIC:**

- TEST AND STAY – CLOSE CONTACT TESTING (ADMINISTERED DAILY FROM THE FIRST DAY OF EXPOSURE FOR AT LEAST 5 DAYS. SHALLOW NASAL SWAB SAMPLES ARE COLLECTED USING BINAXNOW RAPID TEST)
- SYMPTOMATIC TESTING – INDIVIDUAL PRESENTING COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS WHILE AT SCHOOL

- **ROUTINE COVID POOLED TESTING AND LAB BASED FOLLOW-UP TESTING:**

- SHALLOW NASAL SWAB SAMPLES ARE COLLECTED AND KEPT SEPARATE BEFORE BEING GROUPED AT LAB. IF A GROUP TEST IS POSITIVE, INDIVIDUAL TESTING WILL OCCUR WITH A SECOND SET OF INDIVIDUAL SAMPLES SO THE SCHOOL DOESN'T HAVE TO WAIT ANOTHER DAY.

PROTOCOLS

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- New Test and Stay program will allow asymptomatic close contacts to remain in school and participate in sports and extracurriculars so long as they take a rapid antigen test daily, wear a mask, and follow other guidelines as noted in the document.
 - If districts do not have Test-and-Stay available, or an individual or family chooses not to participate, a close contact will need to quarantine at home for at least 7 days from the point of exposure.
 - The list of close contacts who do not need to participate in testing and quarantine protocols has been updated to include individuals on school buses and when students are masked with windows open, regardless of distancing. In addition, the following groups continue to be exempt from testing and quarantine: asymptomatic, vaccinated close contacts; classroom close contacts spaced at least three feet apart while students are masked; and individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days.

PROTOCOLS - CONTINUED

- The COVID-19 symptoms list has been updated (with more symptoms being identified as COVID-19 symptoms only when "in combination with other symptoms"), along with some points of differentiation in COVID-19 symptoms necessitating a PCR test for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms should continue to stay home until symptoms resolve (symptoms listed on next slide).
- Districts and schools may continue to test students with mild symptoms with BinaxNOW tests, if available. So long as these tests are negative, individuals with mild symptoms should remain in school.
- Weekly COVID pooled testing remains strongly recommended for unvaccinated individuals. Vaccinated individuals may still participate at their discretion; however this is not recommended.
- As noted last year, if a student tests positive or presents COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up.
- More protocol and FAQ information [here](#)

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- **Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)**
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

IMMEDIATE STEPS

- Send out parent information letter including the student consent form:
 - [Parent letter](#) (English)
 - Parent letter (translations TBD)
 - [Student consent form](#) (English and translations)
 - [Parent and caregiver materials](#)
 - [COVID-19 Testing Program](#) general information
- Each school needs to decide on testing set-up and COVID 19 waiting area for their school
- Update and re-launch LPS COVID 19 Dashboard
- School nurses updated on new protocols and expectations
- Communication to all staff

UPCOMING

- Testing projected to start the week of 9/7 from Tuesday-Thursday. Testing will usually run Monday-Wednesday.
- School testing days/schedule will be the same as in Spring 2021 with few requested exceptions.
- CIC coordinator and district safety specialist will work together to ensure each school is ready for testing.
- Vaccine clinics available for any school.
- Note: each classroom will be supplied with a basic supplies baggie from nurse similar to last spring.
- Admin pool testing dashboard will be updated to include testing schedule, protocols, all pertinent information including updated positive Covid-19 letter.
- We will still be using the Covid-19 reporting form located under LPSD tab.
- Testing sites for an individual PCR test listed [here](#).